



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Romans 5-8 - Oct. 14/15, 2017 - Jeff Bucknam

Death By Law - (Romans 7:7-12)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

A number of years ago I had a friend who sent me a copy of the final contestants for the Dumbest Criminal in America Awards. I didn't know that those awards existed, but apparently they did and different cities sent in their police reports from their stupidest criminal that they had, alright? So here are the finalists, from a number of years ago, for the Dumbest Criminal in America Awards:

- In Detroit, Michigan, when two service station employees refused to hand over cash to an intoxicated robber, the robber threatened to call the police [laughter]. The employees still refused, so the robber called the police and was, of course, arrested.
- In New Orleans, Louisiana, a man walked into a convenience store, put a \$20 bill on the counter and asked for change. When the clerk opened the cash drawer, the man pulled out a gun and asked for all the cash in the register, which of course the clerk promptly provided. The man took the cash from the clerk and fled, leaving the \$20 bill on the counter. The total amount of cash he got from the drawer was \$15 [laughter].
- In Rochester, New York, as a female shopper exited a store, a man grabbed her purse and ran. The clerk called the police immediately and the woman was able to give them a detailed description of the burglar. Within minutes, the police had apprehended him. They put him in the car and drove back to the store. The thief was then taken out of the car and told to stand there for a positive ID, to which he replied, "Yes officer, that's her. That's the lady I stole the purse from" [laughter].
- In Louisville, Kentucky, two men tried to pull the front of a cash machine off by running a chain from the machine to the bumper of their pickup truck. Instead of pulling the front panel off the machine, though, they pulled the bumper off their truck. Scared, they left the scene and drove home. Of course they left the chain still attached to the machine with their bumper still attached to the chain and their licence plate still attached to the bumper [laughter].
- From my hometown of Seattle, Washington, when a man attempted to siphon gasoline from an RV parked on a Seattle street, he got more than he bargained for. Police arrived at the scene to find an ill man curled up next to an RV in a pool of spilled sewage [laughter]. A police spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal the gasoline, but he plugged his hose into the RV's sewage tank by mistake. The owner of the RV declined to press charges, saying it was the best laugh he'd ever had [laughter].

Dumb law-breakers. Sometimes I watch videos on the internet of dumb law-breakers. People who are trying to steal things and of course they throw a brick and it hits the window and then it hits them in the



law itself. That's one of the favourite things to blame. "You pulled me over officer, but I wouldn't be speeding if the government had a brain in their heads and made this a 140 km road because that is much better than 100 km that it is. For goodness sake! Who is in charge anyway?"

<whispering>Trudeau, right?</whispering/> Listen, is it the fault of the law? Or the law-givers?

Look, you might be a little bit surprised to know that this was actually a live issue in the early church when the Apostle Paul was writing the book of Romans. The reason that it was a live issue - whose fault is it? Is it the law's fault? Is it God's fault? Whose fault is it, our law breaking? The reason this was a live issue is because Paul was interacting with a lot of Jewish people and the Jewish people who had grown up in their Jewish homes had been taught all those years that, "Listen, the law is good. It's a good thing." And yet Paul, the way he talks about it in Romans says that it's a really *bad* kind of thing. At least it sounds like he's saying that. So they are trying to figure out, "How can you on the one hand, Paul, be a good Jew and understanding that the law is good and then at the same time talk about it being so bad? Help us! Is the law sin?" That's the question that he's going to ask here. So what I want to do is I want to put you in the shoes of a first century Jew for a little bit and help you understand what his argument here is and why it is he makes it. So he starts with a question in this passage, right? He raises up this imaginary debate partner who keeps asking him questions, so he raises another question to himself, he gives the answer (second) and then finally I want to give you some implications. Certainly implications that would have been appropriate for the people of that day, but really are appropriate for us as well, okay? So,

- 1) The Question
- 2) The Answer
- 3) The Implications

[The Question]

Here's the first of those: the question. Verse 7: I already mentioned it,

"What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful?"

"Is the good law a bad thing? How does the law and sin-- how do they interrelate?" So, like I said, if you were a little Jewish boy or girl, your parents would gather you around the dinner table and they would, over your kosher dinner, repeat to you the stories of why it is that the Jewish people are unique. "What makes us different than all the other nations? Why is it that we have this national identity? Why is it that you should feel special my little Jewish Ward? Why should you feel special? Because you're a part of this nation." The answer to that is: "Because we have the law. Babylonians don't have the law, Egyptians don't have the law, the Jews have the law. That means that God has a special place for us in his heart because the law is an expression of his character, his holiness, his righteousness. It is actually a way of life. A way of peace and the good life. 'If you follow the law,' says the Lord, 'you will experience great things. A place in the land, harmony in your relationships between each other and between God and you, and it's great!' The law is good! Say it with me: The law is good." (not you), but like, over dinner, right? "The law is good, the law is good." You learn every night. You learn that. Then you grow



up and maybe you have an encounter with-- you live in Rome and you have an encounter with these new Christians and Paul, this Apostle who came and planted the church there, has now sent-- (sorry, he didn't plant the church. He's an Apostle and someone else planted the church.) He sends a letter. He's going to come and visit you guys and he sent a letter now, giving you his theology and you read the beginning of the book of Romans and what you come to conclude is that he doesn't like the law very much. Listen to what he says. For the first seven chapters of Romans, here's what it says about the law:

Romans 3:20,

“No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

Romans 4:15,

“The law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.”

Romans 5:20,

“The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.”

Romans 6:14,

“You are not under law, but under grace.” [Grace and law - opposites]

Romans 7:5,

“For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.”

“What? How can a good Jew talk about the law in such bad ways? The law ‘increases trespasses’, it ‘arouses sinful passions’ in us, it's used by sin to kill us. Paul, are you saying that the law is sinful?” See the question?

[The Answer]

So here's his answer: Verse 7 again. Here we go,

“What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? [No] Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.”



So here's his answer to this question: "Is the law sinful?" "No, the law is not sinful, but it makes me aware of my sin. It reveals the true nature of me as sinful." It's like a blacklight to the law.

You know, the black lights? You've been to Disneyland or something and you go into the ride and it's all dark except you can see each other, but mostly you can see each other's teeth. Or you wore a Nike swoosh shirt and you can see the white Nike swoosh and the white tennis shoes and any white piece on your body is just flaming white and everything else is just dark. Except of course for your stained t-shirt. I've been in these rides before where that morning-- I do the guy test, you know? If it smells good, it's good. So you put the shirt on that morning and you take off in your favourite shirt and you go to the ride in Disney and you're in the blacklight, "Hey look, your teeth" and then you look down at your shirt, which really smelled good, but it looks like-- under the blacklights you can see the mustard from last week over here and the, "Oh, three years ago my child threw up on my shoulder and there it is." You can see all sorts of things that the black light reveals. Listen, it's not that the stuff wasn't there before you went in, it's just that the black light reveals the true nature of it, right? I have a friend who actually owns a black light and he brings it with him to hotel rooms. He doesn't stay in many hotel rooms because he's gone into them and he's like, "There is stuff everywhere man" and it's like, "Okay, well I'm not going to bring one of those in there. I'd just rather not know." Which is the way that a lot of us are toward the law. We say, "Listen, it would be better for us not to have the law if it's going to reveal our sinful condition." But that's what it does. It's revelatory. It's black light-y law. It shows us that we are actually wicked.

So that's what he means when he says, "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law," but it's more than that. It doesn't just reveal the law, it actually produces what it prohibits. So look, you see in verse 8,

"But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting..."

So sin uses the law to produce something in us. You know this is the case, right? The way to get you to do something, in reverse psychology, is to tell you not to do it.

Augustine was one of the great church fathers. He was a black North-African Bishop and he wrote a book called *Confessions*, which you were probably assigned when you were in high school. You probably didn't read it because it's a long prayer to God. It's one of the best books in the history of the Western world and you should probably read it. It's a fantastic book. In it, though, he tells this little story. This is from the fourth century, okay? And he tells this little story in it about his life in North Africa. So here's what he says: he says,

"There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit [really bushy, full pear tree]. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears...not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to



become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in the theft [why did I pick the pears from the tree?]? The desire to steal [he writes] was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing.”

“I did it because they said you shouldn’t do it. Had there not been anyone to even tell me, ‘You shouldn’t take pears from that tree’, I wouldn’t probably have picked pears from that tree. There’s just something that happens in me when the law comes on me that makes me want to break it.” Those of you who have children know this to be true from our birth. “Little Johnny, do not take the cookies. These cookies are for your class on Thursday. Don’t take them, okay? I don’t trust you and I know you are really short, so I’m going to put them on the fourth shelf in the jar. Do not touch the cookies. Say it with me: don’t touch the cookies.” “I won’t touch the cookies.” “Okay Johnny, are you sure?” “I’m positive, mom. I will not touch the cookies.” While he’s saying the words, his eyes are going over to the cookies [laughter]. You go off and you do whatever it is you’re doing - washing the car, mowing the lawn, whatever it is that you’re doing. Little Johnny is supposedly playing Minecraft, but what’s he really doing? Thinking about the cookies. You come inside and you realize that Johnny has built the tower of Babel in your kitchen and he has ascended the side of it, right? He has scaled to the heights and there he is with the jar in his hands and he’s smiling at you. “Why are you getting the cookies?” If he could express himself clearly, he would tell you, “Because you told me not to. It’s all I could think about, the cookies.” Why? Well, there’s something inside of Johnny, that when the law comes on him, when a rule comes on him, that he wants to do something else. He wants to do what it prohibits.

Okay, so I was at the park up in Mission. I was actually at the park a few weeks ago with some friends. Do you remember back when it was sunny? Yes. Actually, it’s sunny today. Every fall there is always that day that goes from being really nice (“21 degrees. The summer will last forever”). to the next day (“Oh yeah, that’s right. We live in the rainiest part of the world”). Well this was the day. It was a Friday and we had made plans with some friends to go to the beach, right? Up in Mission at one of the lakes. It rained all day that day. It was freezing cold and it was the day where the summer shifted immediately to fall and almost winter, so we were like, “Well should we go? Should we not go?” We decided to go. We were going to have a little barbeque, roast some hotdogs and pretend that summer was still there, which we thought it was going to be. Anyway, raining like crazy, there is nobody in the park, right? We arrive at six o’clock and it’s starting to get dark, right? The park closes at 7:45. There’s nobody in the park and it’s going to be raining, folks, for the next six/seven months. There’s nobody there except for two workers who were emptying the trash bags out of the park because they know that, “Listen, we can empty the trash bags now because nobody is going to put anything in if for a while because there’s nobody going to be here.” Anyway, my friends, who we were with, they have a dog with them and they were walking to the little spot where we were going to have our little barbeque and their dog is running a little bit free. One of the girls who works in the park says, “Whose dog is this?” and I said, “My friend’s” and he said, “Yeah, it’s my dog.” She said, “Well, he can’t be in the park.” “Um, why not?” “Well, because he might trouble the other park visitors” [laughter]. “Are you hiding them somewhere? Because there’s none here.” “Well no, but he might make a mess on the grass and that might bother the other park visitors.” “It’s going to rain for a quite a while and we’ll clean up after him, right?” “No, the rule is that you have to have the dog out of the park.” “Well, can he be on a leash?” “No.” “We clean up after him and he’s on a leash. That’s not good enough?” “No” “Even though there is nobody here?” “No,



the rule is..." "Fine." So I'm going to tell you, my friend, as he's walking away with his dog on the leash going back to the car, inside of me I'm thinking to myself, "Do you know what I'm going to do the moment that you leave, dear park worker? I'm going to go get that dog and feed him prunes until he just makes this whole place a mess." I'm not saying it to commend me. I'm saying that that's what is going on inside of me, right? "Don't step on the grass!" [steps on the grass]. "Don't tell me what to do." What is that? Paul says that that's what the law does. It's ironic, the law. It promises life, but it actually turns out for death. It says, "Listen, if you keep me you will live" but in the end, by the fact that you can't keep it, it results in you just being a law-breaker and rightfully condemned. He describes it even more in verse 9,

"Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death [see the irony?]. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

So what he's describing here is very similar to-- when I was younger, I had a friend who lived on the border between Idaho and Montana and in Montana there was no day-time speed limit. My friend, who lived on the border in an Idaho town of about 150 people, when I would go and visit him, like what are you going to do? He'd say, "Let's go and drive in Montana." So he would get his little car out there and he we would just push the pedal all the way down and just take off as fast as we could go. 100 and something miles an hour down the road. It was totally legal. We'd turn around and come back. But there was this point in the drive that we wouldn't always be paying massive attention to where we were, right? But there was a point in the drive where you went from no-day-time-speed-limit-Montana to seventy-mile-an-hour-speed-limit-Idaho. There was a sign there: Welcome to Idaho. Potatoes. You'd cross this border and what happens is that you are alive (believe me, we were living) apart from the law. Then we'd cross this border and the law comes in. By the way, this law in Idaho is meant for our safety and good, right? "Seventy miles an hour is enough," says the state of Idaho. It's actually going to reduce the number of accidents that we have and all sorts of things like that, so we're going to put this good law in. "This law comes in and I was alive apart from the law, but when the law comes in sin springs to life and I die because I'm seen as a law-breaker now." This is what Paul is describing. He's actually probably describing, kind of in solidarity with the people of Israel, the moment where the people of Israel are at the foot of mount Sinai and they actually receive God's law. Do you remember this story in the Old Testament? Where Moses goes up on the mountain and the cloud comes down and "You're not supposed to touch the mountain" God says to all the other Israelites. He goes up and while he's up there they end up making a golden calf. Moses comes down with some of the law and he breaks the tablets as a sign to say, "Listen, you've broken God's ways." He goes back up and he gets a second set of them and he comes back down and now he's going to give the law to the people. You can read that law in Leviticus, for example. In Leviticus 18, here's what it says:

"The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws



and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord.”

“This stuff that I’m giving you,” says the Lord “is not for your bad. It’s not to lead you in a horrible way, it’s actually to lead to your life. If you keep them and you’ll have the good life.” Did they? Like, how’d that work out? You can see the people at the bottom of the hill go, “Alright! We’ve got God’s law as a sign of His love for us. It leads to the good life. Alright! Keep it and we’ll live!” Did they keep it? No. So the good law results in evil. Is that God’s fault? Is it the law’s fault? No, it’s their fault. So the law is Holy and righteous and good. Look, there are a couple of implications to this, okay? I hope you can see his argument here.

[The Implications]

Here are a couple of implications, then. First, if it’s not obvious at this point, God’s law is good. That has huge implications for you and me. Let me explain to you why. In the United States, they have some laws on the books there. So, somebody makes a law in the 1860’s or whatever, and that law stays on the books until somebody actually removes it. Well, a lot of times the local municipalities and stuff don’t have time. Who has got time to go through all those old laws and remove them? So there are all sorts of things that are illegal to do in the United States that are just not enforced. So those laws are *in* force, but they are not *enforced*, see? So here are a few of them. Some of my favourites.

- In Florida - If an elephant is left tied to a parking meter, the parking fee must be paid just as it would for a vehicle. It is also illegal to sing in a public place while attired in a swimsuit in Florida, which you think would be broken every day, right?
- In Illinois - It is illegal to give lighted cigars to dogs, cats, or other pets [laughter].
- In Indiana - Citizens are not allowed to attend a movie or ride in a streetcar within four hours of eating garlic. I think that’s a good one [laughter].
- In Kentucky - It is illegal to transport an ice cream cone in your pocket [laughter]. Sorry, I mean, that’s just hysterical, isn’t it? Like, who wrote that law? At some point..“You know what we need that’s going to solve the problems in this town? Get rid of those pocket ice creams [laughter].
- In Massachusetts - Mourners at a funeral may not eat more than three sandwiches. Snoring is prohibited unless all bedroom windows are closed and securely locked [laughter]. This lady last night said, “Amen” and her husband wasn’t too pleased.
- In Nebraska - A parent can be arrested if a child cannot hold back a burp during a church service.
- In West Virginia - No children may attend school with their breath smelling of “wild onions.” “Those wild onions.”
- In my home state, Washington state, okay? Just across the border (so you need to know these ones, okay?) all lollipops are banned. I did not know that, right? They sell them there, but banned [laughter]. There is a city ordinance-- okay, so there is a city in Washington state that has this law: It’s mandatory for a motorist with criminal intentions to stop at the city limits and telephone the chief of police as he’s entering the town [laughter].



“Okay, why are you talking about stupid laws?” Here’s why: most people in our society and culture (and dare I say even some people in the church these days) view the law of God the same way that you view those laws. “They are old fashioned, they were written for a particular time, and nobody really cares to obey them anymore. In fact, if you want the good life, you should disobey them. Lollipops are great. If you want the good life, you should go the opposite direction from God’s law.” Isn’t that essentially what’s happening these days in our society regarding sexual ethics? “Listen, if you really want to ruin your life, obey God’s law regarding sex. If you want to have a good life, do the exact opposite to that. Serial monogamy? Serial monotony.” “You’re going to forgive instead of seeking vengeance? Are you kidding me? The way to fulfill your life is to actually get back at them and have a better comment than the one that they gave you. To cut him off when he cuts you off. That’s the good life, right? That’s the good life.” And yet, what you get here, is Paul— our culture says, “No, the law is sinful. It’s bad.” That’s not what you get here. Paul is basically saying, “No, no, no, no, no. No, the law is given from a good God who seeks your best. That’s why he gives it.” The rules for living that God has are for your good and as a result, following God’s law then, if you view it that way, if they’re for your good, you should view following God’s law as a delight more than a duty, right? Most people view God’s law as a total duty to follow. “Well, I don’t really want to keep it. It’s really not leading to the right way, but I want to actually do it so that my friends think I’m okay in church or whatever, so I’ll try to keep God’s law, but when no one else is around I’m getting rid of it because I actually, deep in my spirit, think it’s just a duty.” Whereas if you think it’s a delight, you’re going to keep it no matter what. You’re going to try to and love it no matter what. You know what will make God’s law a duty as opposed to a delight? Or rather said, make it a delight as opposed to a duty? How you view the law-giver. How you view God will necessarily affect how you view his law.

I’ll put it to you this way. My kids this week had a video that was being passed around on snapchat of this woman who is a teacher at a university. It was like early stages this year at university, right? This September just passed through, and so in this video apparently she was giving some rules for her class. One of the rules that she had for her class was no pomegranates. You’re not allowed to have pomegranates in her class. Now, she might be allergic or maybe she just has a childhood memory about pomegranates, I don’t know. But, this woman is in the class and of course all the students are in the class, in this day of social media, videoing this woman freaking out about pomegranates. “No pomegranates, do you understand?” This class is in front of her. <yelling>“No pomegranates! No pomegranates! No! No! No!” and she starts jumping, “No pomegranates! Say it with me.” I’m not saying it to you. “Say it with me class!” “No pomegranates.” “No pomegranates!” <yelling/>. Now, let me tell you, if I was in that class, you know what I’m having for lunch the next day? I don’t even like pomegranates, but I’m having a pomegranate because of that thing inside me, right?

So here’s this woman, who I don’t know and the students didn’t know, and she’s demanding no pomegranates. I want you to compare that to say my wife, who actually likes pomegranates, but let’s imagine that in the early stages of our marriage she said, “Listen, there’s a few things that are really important, okay? No infidelity, right? And no pomegranates. I don’t want pomegranates because I hate them and they are horrible and our relationship is going to be adversely affected if you have pomegranates.” Now, I’m going to tell you that if, when I hear that, I am going to approach the law that my wife has made with delight. When I cease eating pomegranates, I’m going to do it because I know



her and I know she wants what's good for our relationship. Her character is driving me towards obedience to that law, but with the other lady, I'm only going to obey it because it's a duty, right? And I might actually have a pomegranate when she's not around. So what's the difference between obedience to my wife and obedience to the teacher? The answer has got to be the character of those people and the way that I perceive their character to be, right? I know my wife loves me and I know that she seeks my good. I don't know that of that teacher. Whether you obey God's law or not, or whether you seek to obey it or love it, has everything to do with how you view God. So how do you view him? Is he a kill-joy trying to ruin all your fun? Seriously, 16 year old, listen to me. Is he ruining everything for you? "Uh, I don't want to keep those. My life is going to be way better if I do x, y, z" or, is this God saying, "No, this is the path of life. If you follow this, believe me, your life will turn out better." Totally dependant on how you view God. The law is good. God is good.

Here's the second implication, okay? So the law is good, God's law is good, but secondly, we aren't. I mean, that's really what Paul is after here. He's trying to vindicate the law. He's saying, "The law isn't the problem here, we are." I want you to imagine a girl, she and her parents and they are having some difficult times. She comes home late, after her curfew. Now, the curfew is instituted by her parents not because they were really mad at her, but because her life is spiraling down a path they are frightened for her because of it, right? So they say to her, "Listen, honey, we need you to be home at this particular time because you've got all these things going on tomorrow. You're life is spiraling down and the people you are hanging out with are (whatever)...we're worried so we're going to institute this law." Of course she keeps breaking it and breaking it and finally she keeps sneaking in late at night and the parents finally figure out, "Okay, here's what we're going to do. We're going to wait up late this night." So she comes back, she's two hours after curfew, she sneaks quietly into the house, and they are standing there. She doesn't expect them. "Ahh!" she freaks out. "What are you doing? Why are you up?" She says. "Because we knew you were going to be late past curfew and we need to talk to you about this." So they sit down in the living room and she sits across from them and they say, "Why is it that you can't keep this law?" and she says, "You and your stupid laws! Your stupid rules! My life is a mess because of your strict, stupid, petty, rules." Is she right? Is the state of her life a result of her parents who made the rules? Is it a result of the rules that they made? Or is it a result of her inability to keep them? It's got to be the third one, right?

If you go to a doctor, as my friend did a few years ago, and you're in the doctor's office and you've got a pain in your leg. He had a pain in his leg, right? He went in there and they didn't know what to do with it so they gave him some medication. Well, he went and took the medication and went home and all of a sudden he developed a rash over his body. He had to go to the hospital. He's laying there in the hospital bed - put yourself in the shoes of this guy - he's laying in the hospital bed with a rash all over his body. Doctors come in and say, "Well, you've had an allergic reaction to the medication." He's like, "Ugh" and everything inside of him wants to blame who? The doctor. But the doctor didn't know. So is it the doctor's fault? Is it the fault of the medication? Or is it the fault of the allergy? See, what you've got is a good doctor giving good medication that is causing problems because there's something inside of him that is rejecting the good thing that the doctor has given. Don't you see? There is something inside of us that stops us from keeping the law of God. It's a sickness, it's an allergy to it, and it drives us to



our wits end. God gives the law, we want to keep it, we say, “Yes, it’s good” but we try and try and we cannot do it and we end up saying, like Paul does at the end of Romans 7, he ends up saying,

“What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?...”

“How will I ever get out of this? This law promises life and if I keep it I have life, but I can’t keep it so I never have life. All I ever has is death and condemnation. How will I get out of it?” Come on, what’s the answer? He gives it in Romans 7:25. He says,

“...Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Listen to me, if you’re a Christian, you should never leave church unhappy, ever. If you do, you’re not listening to me. You are a failure, yes. “Oh, I don’t like being told that.” Fine. I don’t like being told it either, but it’s true. I’m a failure. I cannot keep God’s ways. I try and I try and I cannot keep them, but Jesus kept them and by faith in Jesus I get his righteousness and he gets my wickedness. Scandal! Awesome scandal! So, when I walk out the doors of the church and I know that to be true, every other issue in my life has to be coloured by it, doesn’t it? My eternity is settled. My place before God is settled. I have hope, hope, hope. That should change something about the way that I view my life in the present moment. It should change it. Does it change it? Listen, the only people who should leave church unhappy are those who don’t have Christ, because if you don’t have Christ you are still condemned. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord, yeah?

So there’s the end of my sermon. You need to come back next week. I never do that. I never say it, okay? But here’s why you have to come back next week. I’m so excited. The next passage in the book of Romans is one of the most hotly contested passages in the New Testament and I wrote my Master’s thesis upon it. All of those hours of wasting away thinking I would never be able to share this with anyone and now you’re going to be just in on it. It’s going to be amazing. It’s going to be so good. But I’m going to end up convincing you of something that you are going to think I’m crazy for suggesting at the front end, okay? So, like, controversy. Come, right? Come [laughter]. It’s going to be a lot of fun. I promise it will be fun. But today, if you’re a believer in the Lord Jesus, you should leave happy. Let’s pray,

Father I’m thankful for your grace. I am thankful, Lord, that you have solved the problem of our failure to keep your law. So we are thankful, Father, for the act of obedience of Christ that has been attributed to us because we are justified by faith alone. What a great truth. Father, I pray that that wouldn’t just be words or theology, but that theology would touch our hearts, Lord, and that we would end up living in ways that reflect it. Would you make it so by the power of your Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.